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Corps cancels lower Snake River dredging contract

Walla Walla, Wash., – The contract for dredging on the lower Snake River in fiscal 2003 is being terminated today for the convenience of the government following a court-ordered preliminary injunction against the dredging, according to an announcement from the Walla Walla District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

The National Wildlife Federation, Washington Wildlife Federation, Idaho Wildlife Federation, Idaho Rivers United, Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Associations and Institute for Fisheries Resources filed a lawsuit in federal district court in Seattle, Wash., on Nov. 4, 2002 on the Dredged Material Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement, naming the Corps and National Marine Fisheries Service as defendants. The plaintiffs filed a complaint for declaratory and injunctive relief to halt the dredging. On Dec. 12, the court granted the plaintiffs' motion for preliminary injunction pending a full hearing on the merits of the case.

"The navigation dredging was to be completed during the 'in-water work window' set by NMFS in coordination with state fishery agencies. The work window for the lower Snake River is Dec. 15 to March 1," said Paul Wemhoener, Deputy District Engineer for Project Management and Chief of Planning, Programs, and Project Management Division.

"The latest the Corps could start dredging this year and finish all the dredging planned, depending on equipment availability and weather conditions, is January 2, 2003. Under the current injunction, the Corps will not dredge this winter," Wemhoener said.

A contract for dredging on the Snake River was awarded in October to Dutra Dredging Company, San Rafael, Calif. The value of the contract is \$2.4 million. Costs related to terminating this contract will be negotiated between the contractor and the government.

The Corps had planned to perform routine maintenance dredging on the lower Snake River

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Contract cancel/2-2-2

navigation channel at the confluence of the Snake and Clearwater rivers, several port facilities in the Lewiston-Clarkston area, several recreation facilities in Lower Granite and Little Goose reservoirs, navigation lock approaches to Lower Granite and Lower Monumental Dams, and in other areas.

Canceling the dredging work may impact area shippers. Some port officials have advised the Corps that they may have to load barges more lightly to avoid possible hazards from shoaling, or accumulation of additional deposits of materials.

This planned dredging followed the completion of the Dredged Material Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement in September 2002.

“We believe our Dredged Material Management Plan is based on the best science and engineering available, and represented the best interests of the American taxpayer while protecting natural resources,” said Lt. Col. Edward J. Kertis, Jr., Walla Walla District commander.

“We are constantly working towards meeting the needs of the nation and our stakeholders in this region. Our projects function as authorized by Congress and comply with environmental laws, including the Endangered Species Act,” Kertis said.

More information on the Corps Dredged Material Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement is available on the Walla Walla District Web Site at www.nww.usace.army.mil .